

# 100 MILES OF DITCHES VISITED BY EXAMINER

(By Benjamin Franklin Fly)

Yesterday was a "red-letter day" for me in viewing the irrigation system of the Yuma valley unit of the Yuma project, for I had the pleasure of viewing upward of one hundred miles of canals and ditches. And who do you think I made the long trip with—Messrs. Fleming and Teasdale of the local board of cost review? Noterbitofit. My guide was none other than Mr. D. C. Caylor, acting manager of irrigation of the Yuma project!

By previous agreement, we started from the Examiner office at a few minutes past eight o'clock and were constantly on the move until about half past two. The way my friend, Mr. Caylor, handled that little dinky Ford was nothing short of marvelous. In order that I might see just what his duties are when he goes on a tour of inspection, he took me everywhere, and in order to get there we frequently crossed canals and ditches the banks of which it would tax a Billy goat's energy and cunning to climb; but that little dinkey never once faltered. Whenever the car would begin to cough and spit and buck-jump, Caylor would stop, get out, pat "Old Betsey," on the radiator, throw in a gallon or so of water, and then we were off again.

We visited all the ditches that are now being cleaned out, as well as many of them that are so choked up with silt and salt-grass that they are full to the very brim when a full head of water is turned on. We traversed good roads, bad roads and roads that were worse than no roads at all, many of them put in this latter condition by farmers using so much water that their "borders" are washed away, thereby forcing the water into the roads, while others were made almost impassable by water escaping the canal or ditch through gopher holes or flooded because it could not hold the water on account of the silt and salt-grass.

Naturally, I was inquisitive from the time we started until we got back, and I learned a lot of things, not only from listening to Mr. Caylor, but from observation. When we reached the first ditch that was being cleaned out by scrapers, teams and men, I could but note the terrible expense that is necessarily taxed up against the project because of this slow, plodding method.

"How often are you required to do this?" I asked the irrigation acting manager.

"We have no regular schedule, but because of the awful expense, we clean out the ditches only when we have to," he replied.

"Is there no other method—no better or cheaper method?" I asked.

"We have asked for new equipment,"

he said. "When we get that we will be in fine shape. It is the same equipment now being so successfully used in the Imperial Valley, consisting of a caterpillar engine with a V, that not only plows up the silt and grass, but at the same time lifts it out on the bank and leaves the ditch as clean as though it had just been constructed."

"And what's the cost?"

"The present method costs about \$500 per mile; whereas, with the new equipment that we have asked for the work can be better done for \$75 per mile."

"What will the new equipment cost?"

"It is figured at \$16,500 f. o. b. Yuma."

"Then for Heaven's sake, go get it!" I urged him.

"We certainly are trying to get it, and we all hope Mr. Baldwin will bring word that our request has been granted," said Mr. Caylor.

While on the trip, I saw several of my "paisano" friends, one of whom was kept particularly busy plugging up gopher holes. A full head of water was in the canal and the gopher had been multiplying like rabbits since the last irrigation. Mr. Caylor and I were just in the nick of time to stop two breaks from this cause, that in an hour or less would have been disastrous. Indeed, I found that the pesky little gopher is the greatest menace the Reclamation Service has to contend with. If the land were all in cultivation the task would be comparatively easy, but with half of it yet a desert waste, the gophers are safe, for they live in the uncultivated part, foraging on the nearby farmer and constantly damaging the ditch and canal embankments.

Of course, I saw much work that had been done that appeared to me a wilful waste of the project's money—I mean work done during the course of construction, such as parts of canals and ditches surveyed and constructed and then abandoned "for better or for worse." At the same time, I saw many fine farms grown up to arrow weeds, because the owners did not know how to take advantage of their golden opportunity; and then, again, I saw many, many farms in a perfect state of cultivation, conclusively proving to my mind that this is really the garden spot of the world. And I predict that just as soon as the existing differences are satisfactorily adjusted with Secretary Lane, that it won't be very long until every 40-acre tract in the Yuma valley will be occupied by a prosperous, happy family.

The Examiner is indebted to Mr. Caylor for his courtesies to me, and, personally, I am very thankful to him for affording me such an unusual opportunity of seeing Yuma valley and its irrigation system.

## THE WEATHER REPORT

At 5 p. m., Monday, July 19, 1915, the temperature stood at 104 degrees, with a relative humidity of 24 per cent.

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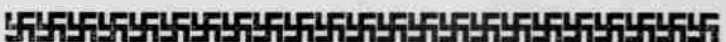


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